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BARRE UNIFIED UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

Spaulding High School Library and Via Video Conference – Google Meet
March 30, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Giuliano Cecchinelli, II (BC) – Chair
Chris Parker (BT) – Vice Chair
Paul Malone (BT) - Clerk
Michael Boutin (BC)
Nancy Leclerc (At-Large)
Ben Moore (BC)
Terry Reil (BT)
Emily Reynolds (BT)
Sonya Spaulding (BC)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Chris Hennessey, Superintendent
Luke Aither, SHS Co-Principal
Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology
Stacy Anderson, Director of Special Services
Jason Derner, Alternative Education Administrator
Pierre Laflamme, BCEMS Principal
Carol Marold, Director of Human Resources
Mari Miller, SHS Assistant Principal
Jennifer Nye, BTMES Principal
Erica Pearson, BTMES Principal
Lisa Perreault, Business Manager
Brenda Waterhouse, BCEMS Principal

GUESTS PRESENT:

Dave Delcore – Times Argus	June Babel	Battah Family	Mel Battah	Martha Blaisdell
Jeff Blow	Tim Boltin	James Carpenter	Erika Dolan	Jody Emerson
Alice Farrell	Miranda Green	Michelle Leeman	Lisa Liotta	Joan McMahon
Michaela Morris	Joelen Mulvaney	Joanne Reynolds	Christopher Roberts	Marge Sichel
Megan Spaulding	Pierre Trepanier	Rachel Van Vliet	Mindy Woodworth	Jan Z

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Mr. Cecchinelli, called the Thursday, March 30, 2023, Special meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., which was held at the Spaulding High School Library and via video conference.

2. Pledge and Mindfulness Moment

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The Board held a Mindfulness Moment.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda

Add Executive Session for discussion of a Personnel Matter.

On a motion by Ms. Parker, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board unanimously voted to approve the Agenda as amended.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

4.1 Public Comment

None.

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4.2 Student Voice

None.

5. Current Business

5.1 BUUSD Budget Approval

A document titled 'FY24 Budget Revote Options & Timeline – Updated March 28, 2023' was distributed.

Copies of the Comparative Tax Rate Calculation Sheets (for both budget options) were distributed.

Mr. Boutin moved to approve a budget increase of 4.97%. The motion was not seconded.

The Board held lengthy discussion regarding the proposed budget options, including expression of preferences on which budget increase is preferred, a query regarding availability of detail relating to newly identified savings/efficiencies (requested at a previous meeting), concern that historically over budgeted line items have been reinstated at the over budgeted amounts, a query regarding availability of detailed budget information (for the Board and the community member at large), concern that the CVCCSD tuition increase was not known until late in the budget process, concern that neither proposal brings back all the staff members that were cut in the previous version, concern regarding newly created positions and a request for clarity (identification of all new positions), the number of unfilled para-educator and BI positions (16), and unfilled special educator positions (4), concern regarding ESSER funded positions being added into the budget, the sharing of information relating to possible legislation, reiteration that historically over budgeted line items are 'over budgeted' again, a query relating to the HRA line item, an explanation for how HRA items are processed by a third party administrator, utilization of permanent substitutes, health insurance/benefit variations, a reduction in the math teacher line item (at SHS – 2 positions moved to CFP grant, one unfilled ELA teacher), a query regarding a reduction to the athletics line item (assistant coaches), queries relating to other line items (including but not limited to; music, regular education BIs, contracted services, transportation, curriculum coordinator positions, and the Communications Department), per-pupil spending, a community member's concern that the per-pupil spending calculation is misleading and doesn't accurately reflect what the District spends (closer to \$25,000 per student), clarification that statute requires a specific way in which per-pupil spending is calculated, a community member's belief that the budget was voted down due to cuts, a community member's concern that budgets have been reduced over time, community input regarding marketing of a new budget, a community member's queries regarding book purchases and the purpose of surpluses, a community member's concern regarding coordination with the State (regarding the overall tax impact from state and local tax increases), and a query regarding the return on investment (what is the expected increase in student achievement with the higher budget?). **Mr. Boutin moved to have a 4.97% budget increase. The motion was not seconded.** Mr. Reil, citing concern raised by an SHS Math teacher in a previous meeting, requested that the specific question, posed by Mrs. Farrell, regarding the purchase of math books, be answered. Mr. Reil believes the correct path moving forward is for the Board and community to receive additional information, and postpone adopting a budget until after more information is received. Mrs. Spaulding thanked administrators for their work on the budget. Ms. Parker advised that she does not want to use 'assumptions' when promoting the budget.

Mr. Boutin moved to approve a 6.5% budget increase. The motion was not seconded. In response to a query, Mrs. Perreault advised regarding the impact the Yield has on the tax rate. Mrs. Perreault hopes that positions funded by ESSER can be funded through attrition (when ESSER funds run out). Mrs. Leclerc requested specific information on items that are planned (by the District) to increase student achievement and test scores and expressed concern regarding the reduction in student counts (student counts dropping, budgets increasing). Mr. Hennessey advised that the needs of students and the cost of educating students, is increasing.

Mr. Boutin moved to approve the 5% budget. Mrs. Spaulding seconded the motion. Mr. Reil reiterated his concern that the 6.5% budget still hasn't been shared with the community and he believes it's irresponsible for the Board to vote on a budget that not everyone has had time to review and absorb. Mrs. Spaulding noted that the 5% line item budget has been shared and she does not believe the 6.5% budget information is necessary, as some of that information has been included in tonight's packet.

Mr. Boutin called the question. The motion was not seconded. The motion was not voted on. The Chair called the vote.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mrs. Spaulding, the Board voted 5 to 4 to approve the 5% budget.

Mr. Cecchinelli, Mr. Moore, Ms. Parker, Ms. Reynolds, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion.

Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted against the motion.

5.2 BUUSD Warning Approval

Two BUUSD Warnings for the May 9, 2023 Revote were distributed. One Warning reflects a 10.6% increase in cost per pupil, the other reflects a 12.6% increase in cost per pupil.

Mr. Boutin moved to approve the Warning that reads "Shall the voters of the Barre Unified Union School District approve the school board to expend \$55,615,633, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$17,978 per equalized pupil. This reflects a 5% general fund increase." Mr. Malone seconded the motion.

Mr. Delcore advised that the Article is usually written with the increase in per-pupil spending, which under this budget is an increase of 10.6%. Mr. Hennessey advised that the change in the percentage increase was intentional. It was clarified that the overall budget increase is 5%, though the per-pupil spending is increasing by 10.6%. Concern was raised that the first vote contained the cost per pupil increase percentage and that to change it to the overall increase for the second vote is confusing and misleading to voters.

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Mr. Boutin and Mr. Malone agreed to a friendly amendment to change the motion to contain the increase in cost per pupil (10.6%), rather than the increase to the general fund expenditure (5%). Mr. Boutin stated the need to provide clarity so that the Warning is aligned with the previous Warning (ballot language). Mr. Boutin restated the motion to read; **to approve the Warning that reads “Shall the voters of the Barre Unified Union School District approve the school board to expend \$55,615,633, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$17,978 per equalized pupil. The projected spending per equalized pupil is 10.6% higher than spending for the current year.”**

Mr. Boutin called the question. The motion was not seconded. Mr. Cecchinelli called the vote.

Discussion was held regarding the reasons individuals voted as they did. **Mr. Reil called Point of Order. The Point of order was not recognized.** Mr. Cecchinelli queried regarding how each Board Member voted. Mrs. Spaulding and Mrs. Leclerc advised they had not voted. **Mr. Reil was recognized for the Point of Order and advised that discussion is not allowed after a vote is held.** Mr. Cecchinelli advised he is unclear on the votes and took a roll call of the vote.

On a motion by Mr. Boutin, seconded by Mr. Malone, the Board voted 5 to 4 against the motion to approve the Warning that reads “Shall the voters of the Barre Unified Union School District approve the school board to expend \$55,615,633, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$17,978 per equalized pupil. The projected spending per equalized pupil is 10.6% higher than spending for the current year.”

**Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted for the motion.
Mr. Cecchinelli, Mr. Moore, Ms. Parker, Ms. Reynolds, and Mrs. Spaulding voted against the motion.**

Mrs. Spaulding made a motion to approve the Warning that reads “Shall the voters of the Barre Unified Union School District approve the school board to expend \$55,615,633, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$17,978 per equalized pupil. This reflects a 5% general fund increase. Ms. Parker seconded the motion.

Mr. Boutin believes the wording as listed on the draft warning is deceptive, advising that he will vote against the motion, which is surprising given that it is for a Warning, which is usually perfunctory. **Mr. Boutin called the question. The motion was not seconded. No vote was held on the motion to call the question.**

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Ms. Parker, the Board voted 5 to 4 to approve the Warning that reads “Shall the voters of the Barre Unified Union School District approve the school board to expend \$55,615,633, which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$17,978 per equalized pupil. This reflects a 5% general fund increase.

**Mr. Cecchinelli, Mr. Moore, Ms. Parker, Ms. Reynolds, and Mrs. Spaulding voted for the motion.
Mr. Boutin, Mrs. Leclerc, Mr. Malone, and Mr. Reil voted against the motion.**

6. Executive Session – Personnel Matter

A Personnel Matter was proposed for discussion in Executive Session. Mr. Delcore requested clarification regarding the personnel matter. It was noted that the Personnel Matter pertains to a resignation and no action will be necessary.

On a motion by Mr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Boutin, the Board unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session, with Mr. Hennessey in attendance, at 7:50 p.m. under the provisions of 1 VSA section 313 to discuss the item proposed for discussion.

The remaining information was provided by the Board Clerk.

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Boutin, the Board unanimously voted to exit Executive Session at 8:10 p.m.

7. Adjournment

On a motion by Mrs. Spaulding, seconded by Mr. Boutin, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrea Poulin